

people for a term of three years. By what seems, in the absence of the reasons assigned, a singular arrangement, the elected Councillors are in each case to associate with themselves from among the ratepayers, appointees, in the ratio of one for every four of their own number. These "optated" members, as they are termed, are to be appointed for six years, the idea being perhaps that being chosen by a special and limited constituency and having a longer tenure of office, they may serve to some extent as an Upper House, in checking hasty legislation, and exercising a general Conservative influence in the Municipal Commons. It may be doubted whether this Bill is not the longest stride in the direction of pure democracy ever proposed in any single Act of Parliament. If it passes unchanged in its essential features, of which there is little doubt seeing that all parties are uniting to push it through, it cannot fail to work changes which will almost revolutionize the political and social life of English towns and villages in a single generation.

SOME of the late cable despatches intimate that the Boulanger excitement in France is waning, and that the day of opportunity, if there ever was one, for the ambitious General is past. This announcement seems, however, to be at least premature, as other despatches of the same date indicate. The most salient fact underlying the whole agitation seems to be that the people of France are tired of the mediocrity and instability of successive Governments and want a leader. Whether the present movement is the end or the beginning of the Boulanger career depends, in all possibility, upon whether he has or has not in him the strength and resources needful in a great popular leader. Upon this point opinion is yet undecided, though it is generally admitted that he has, as yet, furnished little evidence of the possession of such qualities. Should the leader, capable of thoroughly firing the French imagination and capturing the French heart, appear, whether in the person of Boulanger or some other individual, the further question of France's continued freedom, or return to absolutism, would depend upon whether the popular hero proved to be a patriot or a self-seeking adventurer.

A CURIOUS but radical difference in motive makes itself apparent in the arguments of those who are proposing various schemes for the reform of the House of Lords. Even so conservative a journal as the *St. James's Gazette* admits that the Upper House might be very greatly improved. It suggests that a rule might be adopted which should allow no Peer to take his seat till he had attained the age of (say) thirty years, and that the House should have the power to purge itself of Peers who have been guilty of gross misconduct, such as fraudulent bankrupts, swindlers, defaulters, and *roués* of such a type as would be excluded from decent society. But the fundamental question which gives rise to the broadest differences of opinion, and of suggested modes of reform, is that of the end to be kept in view in making the reform. Is the House of Lords to be reconstructed in order to bring it more into touch with the popular sentiment, or in order to strengthen it as a bulwark against the rushing tide of democracy? It is evident that the measures designed to seat the House of Lords more firmly on its base as the great fortress of national conservatism and class privilege will differ broadly in kind and scope from those designed to make it more flexible and responsive to the sway of the popular will. The radical element in the nation will feel bound to oppose any change which, however salutary in itself, would tend to entrench the upper classes more strongly in the possession of their ancient prerogatives. Hence, it is evident that there can be little hope of much improvement in the character of the Chamber until the great battle with democracy shall have been fought out to an issue.

WHAT next? We have before us a circular of the "Scottish Home Rule Association" setting forth the intention of that body to form "a Scottish Party in Parliament," and, they say, "with this object in view, we may, at the first General Election, have to contest several seats in the interests of our country." The thing would be utterly ludicrous, if it were not so vexatious. It would be almost contemptible only that we are warned not to despise our enemies. As far as Canada is concerned, however, let us note that we are threatened with a canvass for subscriptions, and so with another apple of discord thrown into our civil, religious, and political life, as though we had not enough already! Of course, we cannot hinder people from giving their money for foolish or mischievous purposes any more than we can prevent them from throwing it into Lake Ontario or the Atlantic Ocean. If we may venture to offer advice or opinion, we would say that they will do much better by sinking it in the water of the lake than by giving it to this new Home Rule Association.

THE prospects for the passage of the International Copyright Bill now before the American Congress are said to be exceedingly good. The promoters of the Bill have had a very favourable hearing before the Judiciary Committee of the Senate, the members of the Committee expressing their approval of the substance of the measure. It is believed that as a result of the very general discussion of the matter during the past winter, a large majority of the House of Representatives are now in favour of the Bill, and will vote for it if it can be got before them. Opinions in Canada are probably somewhat divided in regard to the effect the passage of such a Bill would have upon the publishing business, and the price of books in the Dominion, but it is to be presumed that Canadians of all classes will be at least as ready as their neighbours to assent to the principle of International Copyright on the ground of its inherent righteousness, and to subordinate personal and business interests to that supreme obligation.

THE recent meeting of the Woman's International Council at Washington was, to employ a much abused word, a "phenomenal" affair. As an illustration of the strength of the great revolution which has been for some time going on in the views of women, at least of a large class of women, in regard to the position of their sex and its work in society and in the world, it was not only significant but unique. As a demonstration of the strength of the intellectual and moral forces which are being developed and controlled by the women of the day it was most striking. A gathering embracing in its crowd of delegates representatives of nearly forty organizations of women, and including not only a goodly number of the ablest of the sex in the United States, but some from Canada, England, Scotland, France, Norway, Denmark, Finland, and even the Pundita Romalior, to expound her great scheme for the elevation of the women of India, made certainly a noteworthy gathering. Add to this a programme which was a pamphlet of itself, and which was carried out in a series of crowded meetings extending over eight days, and addressed by eighty speakers, and we have certainly the conditions of a mighty social movement. The magnitude of the scale on which the Council was carried on, puts any attempt at a condensed view of its proceedings out of the question. As an exposition of the great work being done by women, through the various organizations represented, the meeting is pronounced a complete success. Some of its chief defects seem to have been the absence of representatives from many of the more unobtrusive but beneficial branches of woman's work, its lack of unity, and its weakness in the direction of settling general principles and determining lines of procedure for future guidance. While not ostensibly gathered for the promotion of female suffrage, candid critics report a marked tendency in the speakers to recur constantly to the suffrage question as the centre of strongest attraction. If the Council is made, as seems probable, the first of a series of annual councils, it marks, no doubt, the beginning of a very powerful organization.

THE prolonged strike of the Engineers on the Burlington Railroad system illustrates the very serious difficulties connected with railway legislation and management in these days. The interests of companies, employees, and the public are so intertwined, and often in appearance at least so inter-crossed, that it seems well nigh impossible to disentangle them. Any means suggested for the protection of the rights of one party seems almost inevitably to threaten injury to those of another. The right of labour to organization and concerted action, for its own protection, is now acknowledged, and yet the gravest inconvenience and loss to the public are frequently the outcome of that acknowledgment. The right of a private corporation to manage its property and conduct its business in its own way, and to employ and dismiss operatives at pleasure has always been regarded as almost axiomatic, but yet the attempt to insist upon that right inflicts incalculable loss upon a large section of country and thousands of people. As a means of settling the difficulty, or of enforcing their views upon the company, the Engineers' strike, like most others, is a failure. On the other hand the refusal of the company to submit the questions at issue to arbitration creates a strong presumption against the equity of its cause. The view that is strongly advocated by some influential journals, and that seems likely eventually to prevail, is that a railroad is not only private property but a public highway, that the public has a right to insist that it be managed in the interests of the public rather than the corporation when the two seem to conflict, and that as a first step for the protection of those paramount interests, a scheme for the prevention of strikes by compulsory arbitration must be devised. The objections urged against such legislation are many and weighty, but it is pretty clear that public opinion, at least in the United States, is tending rapidly in that direction as affording the